

REMARKS

Claims 1 to 4, 7 to 10, 13 to 16 and 19 to 24 are now pending and being considered (since claims 5, 6, 11, 12, 17 and 18 were withdrawn in response to a restriction requirement and since claims 25 to 72 were canceled in the Preliminary Amendment).

It is respectfully submitted that all of the presently pending claims are allowable, and reconsideration is respectfully requested.

Applicants respectfully request that the Examiner acknowledge whether the Drawings are accepted in the next Office Communication, and also acknowledge the claims for foreign priority.

With respect to paragraph three (3) of the Office Action, claims 1 to 3, 7 to 9, 13 to 15 and 19 to 23 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) as unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 6,694,040 ("Hayashi et al.").

The anticipation rejections are traversed, since the present application, as provided for in the previously filed Preliminary Amendment, claims the benefit and priority of and is a division of U.S. Patent Application Serial No. 09/386,993, filed August 31, 1999 -- which claims foreign priority benefits under 35 U.S.C. § 119 of Japanese Patent Application No. 10-251193, filed September 4, 1998; Japanese Patent Application No. 11-30540, filed February 8, 1999; Japanese Patent Application No. 11-40713, filed February 18, 1999 and Japanese Patent Application No. 11-118072, filed April 26, 1999 -- all of the Japanese priority patent applications have filing dates prior to the July 27, 1999 filing date of the Hayashi reference. **As required by the Office, Certified English translations of the four priority Japanese patent applications accompany this response.**

Accordingly, the Hayashi reference is not prior art and the rejected claims are therefore allowable over Hayashi. Accordingly, the rejected claims are allowable.

With respect to paragraph five (5), claims 4, 10, 16, 22 and 24 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as unpatentable over Hayashi in view of "Ho et al.", U.S. Patent No. 6,983,057.

Claims 4, 10, 16, 22 and 24 depend from claims which are allowable over Hayashi, since Hayashi is not prior art. Accordingly, these dependent claims are allowable for the same reasons as their respective base claims, since the secondary reference does not cure – and is not asserted to cure – the critical deficiencies of Hayashi – which is not prior art as to the present application.

Accordingly, claims 4, 10, 16, 22 and 24 are allowable.

It is therefore respectfully submitted that claims 1 to 4, 7 to 10, 13 to 16 and 19 to 24 are allowable.

Conclusion

It is therefore respectfully submitted that all of claims 1 to 4, 7 to 10, 13 to 16 and 19 to 24 are allowable. It is therefore respectfully requested that the rejections be withdrawn, since all issues raised have been addressed and obviated. An early and favorable action on the merits is therefore respectfully requested.

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Respectfully submitted,

By: _____

Aaron C. Deditch
Reg. No. 33,865

KENYON & KENYON LLP
One Broadway
New York, New York 10004
(212) 425-7200

CUSTOMER NO. 26646